

From Hot Dog Cart to Hot New Regina Restaurant

By Elaine Carlson

Like a lot of kids, Kelly Burns grew up in a family whose parents both worked to provide for their children.

"I appreciate everything they did for us and we lived a comfortable life, but we always had to be careful with money," he recalls. "so early on, I was determined I would live life differently."

That determination led him into entrepreneurship; his first venture at the age of 19 was a home-delivery dog food

franchise he owned with his older brother. After gaining some business acumen and the kind of confidence you get from making your own money, Burns got into the hot dog cart business.

It's been a steady upward climb ever since. Today, Burns owns three Regina restaurants: Mongolie Grill, the Hub Sports Bar Grill, and the newest—Browns Social House, which opened its doors in Regina's bustling north end in May 2011

and which has been garnering rave reviews ever since.

The upscale-casual restaurant is now listed among the top 20 best eating places in Regina on urbanspoon.com. The weekend queues of patrons who seek out the restaurant's eclectic menu and social atmosphere don't appear to be getting any shorter, and even better, customers are quick to post praises on social networking sites.continued on page 5

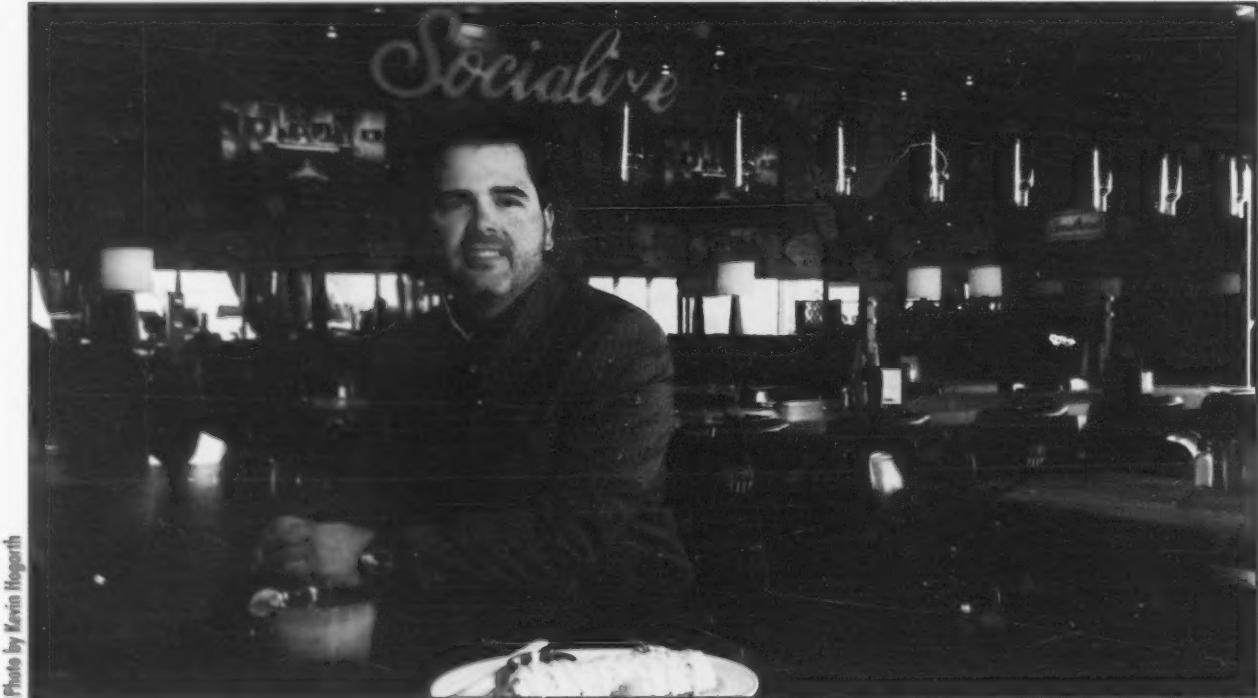
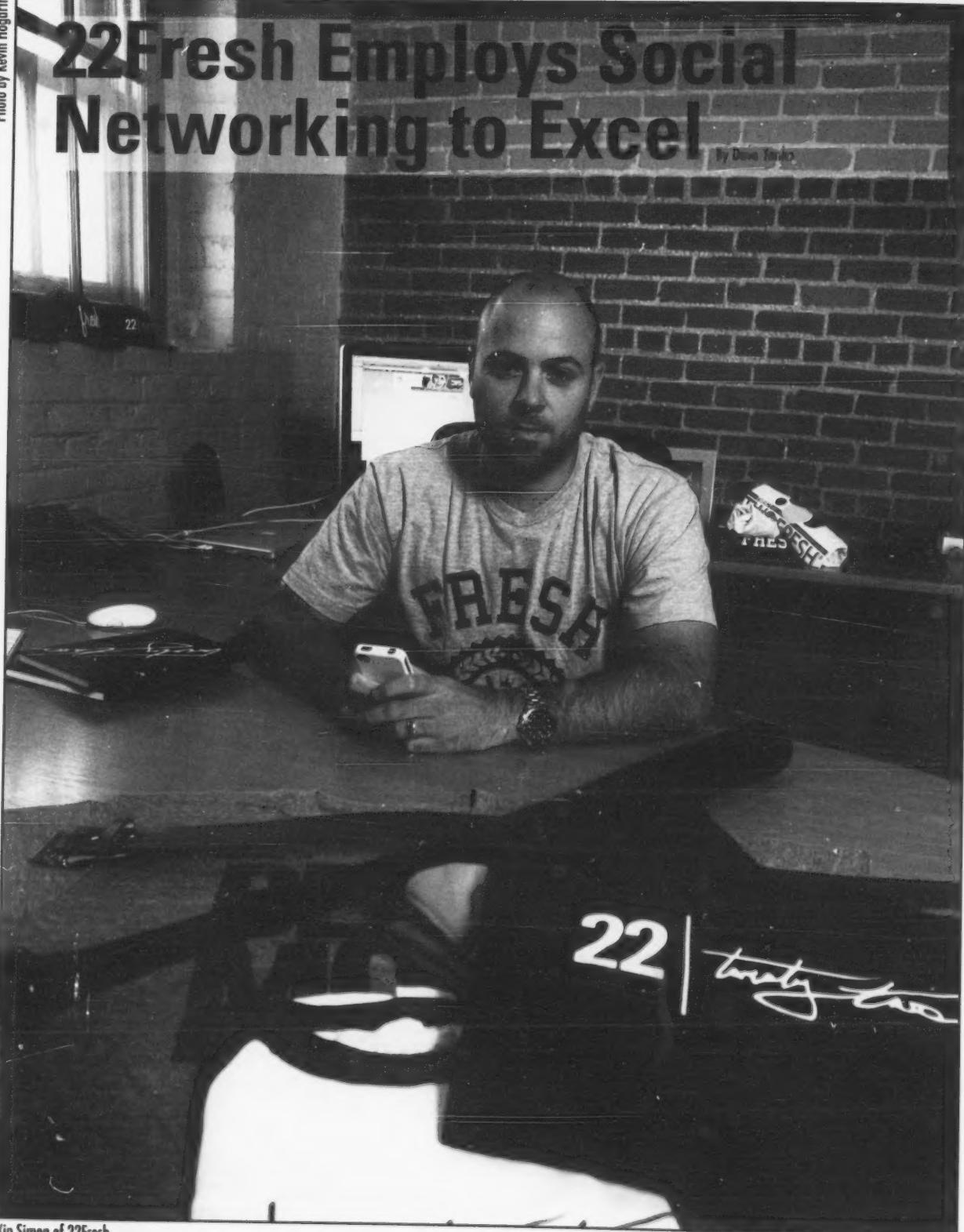


Photo by Kevin Hogarth

Kelly Burns of Browns Social House



22Fresh Employs Social Networking to Excel

By Dave Taito

Regina lifestyle and apparel company 22Fresh is like a real-world tutorial on how to use social media to target markets, build community and erase international boundaries. But this vibrant start-up also serves as a strong reminder that a great business idea, alone, is worth zero.

"I think a lot of people have good ideas," says Kip Simon, co-owner of 22Fresh and the 2011 winner of the Saskatchewan Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs (SYPE) Volta Award.

"But I think an idea isn't really worth anything unless you put some legs on it."

Simon's idea for 22Fresh began evolving while he was playing college baseball in the United States. Teammates in the locker room at his Colorado junior college frequently complained about the poor fit and quality of their baseball pants. Simon, 28, was studying business administration and he took note of that.

"In terms of on-field gear, our team was given top-of-the-line bats, shoes, gloves—all that stuff. But there was just nothing out there that I and the other athletes liked in terms of baseball pants. So I just kind of stored that in the back of my head."

Simon says traditional sports like baseball are more conservative in character, and that carries over into the clothing worn by players on and off the field. This had always been a bit of an issue for Simon, a stickler for style who says teammates nicknamed him "Hollywood" or "Big League" because he always liked to look good on and off the field.

After transferring to a Division I school in Indiana to play the third and fourth years of his college baseball career, he saw the same shortcomings in baseball pants. They were too short in the legs, he explains, and the use of elastic in the

ankles was irritating. They also were unnecessarily "droopy" in the crotch, which limits movement.

"It's a top-five conference in the nation and there's more money, more people, more everything. And I still noticed the pants never got any better. And besides that, they were completely dorky looking things. And it didn't have to be that way."

Simon's idea was beginning to take form. He was alive to opportunity in the clothing industry and entrepreneurial in spirit. In high school, for instance, he and some friends operated a small apparel business that saw him selling hoodies from his car in the school parking lot.

At the same time Simon's idea for a better baseball pant was crystallizing, Mark Zuckerberg was expanding his social media website Facebook to 50 American universities, including the one Simon was attending. He signed on and began building a network of Facebook friends. And while he didn't know it then, the now phenomenally popular site would be integral to the success of 22Fresh.

Following a period of readjustment on his return home to Regina in 2007, Simon was ready to give legs to his idea. He pitched his notion of a niche sports apparel company to two partners and they agreed to commit time and resources to the project. He worked hard with a local tailor to come up with a prototypical baseball pant pattern that addressed the poor fit, performance and look of existing pants.

He had a dozen pairs created and distributed them to several current teammates on the Regina Red Sox and to former teammates in the United States. It didn't take long to know he was onto something.

"I love living here... I can drive down the street to my photographer's place and within a day, we can come up with stuff that would impress the Nikes of the world."

"There were some big things the big brands were missing at the time, and I totally nailed it," he recalls. "I had 100-per-cent-positive feedback on the pants."

Simon and his partners found a Vancouver supplier and began their business with a shipment of 1,000 baseball pants, stored in every available closet and storage area in their Regina building. After adding a line of locally produced t-shirts, the next move was to construct a website with a payment option allowing people everywhere to buy the pants.

"Once I had a website, I had to direct traffic to it," he says. "With Facebook, I had access to anyone I ever played baseball with or against. I didn't have to waste money or time on anyone who wasn't a student athlete or, more specifically, a baseball player."

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RMs Identify and Build on Economic Strengths

Rural Municipalities (RM) in the Prairie Innovation Enterprise Region (PIER) are working together to identify and build on the economic strengths of their jurisdictions in order to attract business and leverage the opportunities provided by new and existing investors.

PIER, which is the regional economic development agency in the Humboldt area, will be working with 28 RMs to populate the new Business Capacity Listing project database with information on industry, businesses and services that are locally available.

The Business Capacity Listing was created using the Synchronist software system tool that is employed by PIER and other enterprise regions for organization, management and analysis of business and industry information relating to business retention and expansion activities.

PIER CEO Sylvia Waterer says she will be working with the Mid Sask Municipal Alliance and the other RMs to ensure that their industry, businesses and services are registered in the Business Capacity Listing.

PIER is working on an agreement for the use of the Business Capacity Listing database by BHP Billiton as they continue toward the proposed \$10 billion Jansen potash project. BHP Billiton plans to maximize local products and services in the construction and operation of its mine. This one-stop window will make it easier for BHP Billiton to contract with local industry, businesses and services,

which will result in significant economic benefits within the region.

According to Waterer, PIER is also working with various RMs on partner projects that they have both identified as priorities for development in their economic region.

For example, PIER is currently working towards a partnership with the RM of Leroy on a growth management project that will address housing for employees of industry. The housing need will grow quickly as construction of the nearby Jansen potash mine picks up and construction employees come in seeking places to stay.

This project will be an important component of a "Made in PIER" Regional Housing Plan which the economic development agency plans to develop for the RMs within the PIER enterprise region.

PIER also partnered with the RM of Morris to expand its economic potential with a focus on the tourism industry.

The RM of Hoodoo also partnered with PIER and is developing a lakeshore management plan for the region. The natural resources will be accessed in terms of the potential for a sustainable economic development program.

The Enterprise Regions program is an initiative to reorganize and strengthen the way regional economic development is delivered in the province. The program focuses on sustainable economic growth by supporting regional business and industries and creating competitiveness advantages at the regional, national and international level. This is done in collaboration with local stakeholders such as municipalities, Aboriginals, Co-ops, educational institutions, and other community development organizations.



Serge Pelletier, Lead Community Liaison for BHP Billiton, speaks at a PIER-hosted Business Capacity Listing Project in Leroy, Saskatchewan

Hot New Regina Restaurant

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The Browns Social House franchise is the creation of Vancouverite Scott Morison, who opened his first Browns restaurant in 2004. His goal has been to maintain the traditional neighbourhood bar and grill appearance that patrons favour, while boosting its overall appeal through upgrades such as ergonomic furnishings and global décor which creates the ambience of a comfortable, casual, yet top quality restaurant—but all within a much smaller and much more affordable space. The concept was well-received; the small footprint also makes it easier to expand into smaller centres or suburban areas without a huge outlay of capital—a tremendous advantage in the business. Morison's chefs also took bar and grill food to another level and continue to develop new recipes for today's discerning patrons, then taste, test and re-evaluate menu items for consistency and quality. Customer service is a priority; the motto of "work hard and be nice to people" is taken seriously.

Scott Ward is VP of Operations for Browns Restaurant Group. "In the beginning, we found a small niche that we've been able to grow into a concept we call 'social house'. We describe ourselves as a hybrid of a neighbourhood pub and a casual, upscale restaurant," he explains.

"We offer our patrons a casual style with sophistication, but also the same friendliness, genuineness and, frankly, value that a pub or local neighbourhood joint would have—and in their own neighbourhood." Morison started franchising the concept four years ago.

Considering the restaurant business is

among the most volatile anywhere, and that Regina has the second-highest restaurant-per-resident ratio in Canada, Burns was scrupulous in doing his homework before he acquired the Browns Social House franchise. He also came up with an innovative business plan based on his own experience in the restaurant business: share ownership. It was a big motivator for Burns.

"I started out as a manager with a 25 per cent share in the Mongolie Grill, then bought out the rest of the partners within three years," he says. "I make sure that my general managers buy in for at least 10 per cent and offer the same option to my chef. It works great because people have a vested interest in the success of the place."

Burns also has a recruitment advantage. "Over the years, I've met a lot of good people in the industry. I always try to promote from within, too." He currently employs about 150 people in his three restaurants.

Burns was savvy about the location as well. He noted that, even with the large number of restaurants in Regina, people still lined up on Friday nights to get into them. "Nor was there much in north Regina where people could get together after work, have a drink, have dinner, and stay for a little longer with friends."

His approach sealed the deal. "Kelly came forward as a very young, very energetic and very entrepreneurial fellow," says Ward. "He had success with another franchise, he brought the sports bar to greater heights, and we were impressed with how he envisioned

"I make sure that my general managers buy in for at least 10 per cent... it works great because people have a vested interest in the success of the place."

running his business from a people standpoint as well as how he connects with his consumers. The fit was right, we were aligned on values and principles, and he satisfied our need on financial aspects."

The head office folks were even more impressed when they made a follow-up visit. "Under Burns' leadership, the market has been performing very well, and indeed, he's in the top 25 percentile of our company," says Ward.

One would think Burns has earned the right to stop and bask in his success. But even with the challenges of securing bank financing for a volatile industry and finding affordable leasing in a heated marketplace, his goal is to grow with the brand. "I have a tentative deal signed for more Browns Social House locations in Regina and Saskatoon, and hope we can open in smaller centres, too. We're also trying to get into commercial development as a way of overcoming the need to lease."

Not bad for the kid who was once a hot dog vendor.

Creating a Crystal-Clear Solution

By Virginia Wilkinson

Like magic, Saskatchewan-based Tec-Water Supplies Inc.'s new Floc Filtration system takes dirty surface water and turns out clear water, ready for purification and then drinking. The newly developed Floc Filtration 100 System is in hot demand across Saskatchewan—and now around the world.

Located in Tisdale, Saskatchewan, Tec-Water was started by Bill Kidd in 1988,

"Our goal was to create a mini version of a water treatment plant that would only run when needed, using a batch process rather than a continuous flow, and was automatic."

as a distributor of water treatment equipment and products. Within a few years, Bill found that many of his clients were coming in saying that their filter and treatment equipment were either not working, or only working for short periods of time.

"People were telling me their water had so many problems that the standard equipment was getting gummed up with sludge, and was no longer doing the job they needed," says Bill.

"I wasn't interested in selling equipment that wasn't going to work."

He began searching for a better pre-treatment filtration system. After much research, he realized the system he was searching for didn't exist. So Kidd decided to create it himself.

"Our goal was to create a mini version of a city water treatment plant, that would run only when needed, using a batch process rather than a continuous flow, and was automatic—eliminating the need for someone to be on hand when a batch was running," says Tec-Water partner Joely Kidd.

It was a lofty goal, especially since the family continued to run the equipment and product distribution end of the business while working on the new process.

Key to their success was identifying a coagulant that would successfully bind with the impurities in the dirty water and fall to the bottom of a tank. Bill tried a number of different coagulants, ensuring they reduced or eliminated impurities, colors and odours in the water. Eventually, he found a product that did exactly what he wanted.

"It took unheard-of turbidity levels and brought them within the water quality guidelines—it proved itself in a very short period of time," he says.

Before the prototype was even finished in 1996, a long list of people had signed

up to test the new system. All continued to use the system once the tests had wrapped up. He then started to get calls from larger farms, smaller municipalities and regional parks.

In 2009, Tec-Water was approached by Sun Dale Recreation, a new resort development outside of Regina that was looking to create a unique water treatment plant. It was the first community-sized (approximately 300 homes) Floc Filtration System that Bill had developed.

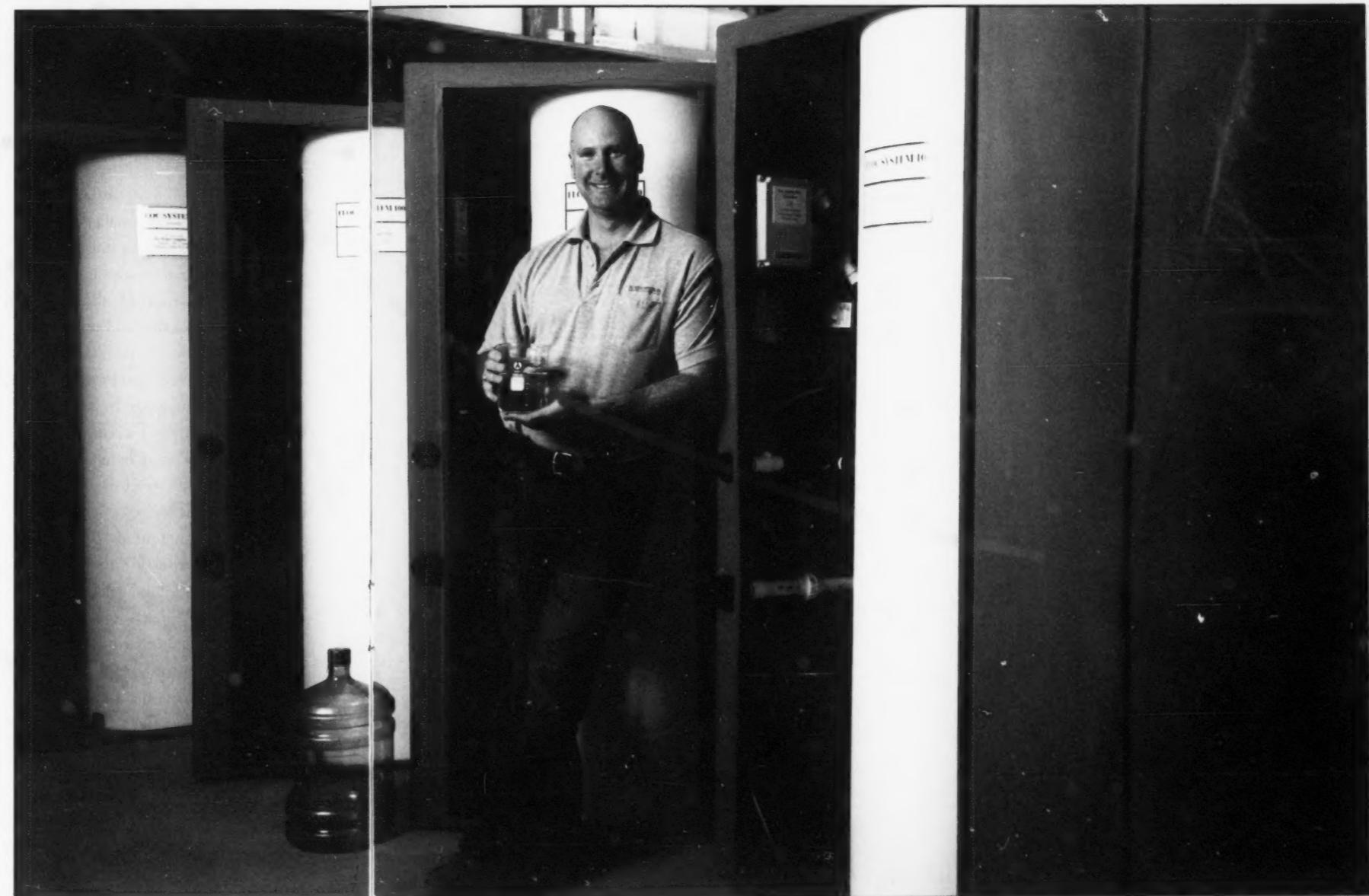
"It was very exciting. It really became a living lab for us. We were able to take what we had developed and expand it for

a community system. We received great support and assistance from Communities of Tomorrow."

Joely says the treatment plant at Sun Dale has been a huge success, providing high-quality drinking water to all resort development residents.

Today, Tec-Water's systems are used in hundreds of homes and farm settings, and in five small communities. The

company has daily requests for their product from across the country and more recently around the world. They've also had numerous investor requests. In fact, Tec-Water has had so many requests they can't keep up. They are currently looking at expansion options to help them address the demand they expect will continue to grow into the future. ■



Bill Kidd of Tec-Water

Photo by Kevin Hogarth

22Fresh

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Today, 22Fresh is generating total sales in the six-figure range—seven figures “in the near future”—from markets in the U.S., Canada and a handful of countries overseas. And while the company is in the process of moving its baseball pant production to China, most business now comes from its lifestyle apparel. 22Fresh’s signature hoodies, hats, t-shirts and belts are manufactured in, and distributed from, the U.S., which accounts for about 60 per cent of sales.

Simon uses Facebook to keep in touch with his customers and take a leadership role in the active lifestyle community he has created. That can involve anything from customer service to helping people pick music for their iPods, he says.

“It’s about building a network. And the beauty of being online is they’re always one click away from entering our store.”

Another advantage is 22Fresh can operate successfully from Regina in an

industry where participation used to be confined to large centres like Toronto or New York. Simon says Regina has everything 22Fresh needs to succeed.

Moreover, it’s home.

“I love living here. And there’s a great pool of talent, from photographers to videographers to models. I can drive down the street to my photographer’s place and within a day, we can come up with stuff that would impress the Nikes of the world.” *se*

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